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Testimony Re: House Bill 6193

February 23, 2010

Testimony By: Marcia A. Leclerc, Mayor, Town of East Hartford

Honorable Co-Chairman Senator Maynard and Co-Chairman Guerrero; Distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Marcia Leclerc and I serve as Mayor of the Town of East Hartford.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee this morning in regards to House Bill 6193, specifically as it relates to amending General Statute 14-111g. (c.)

The amendment requires the dates of completion for operator retraining remain on the operator's driving history record "until such person has attained a three year period without any additional moving violations or suspension violations." The amendment further empowers the Commissioner to suspend the license of a habitual violator for up to ninety days for subsequent violations.

This amendment provides for real consequences to behavior not in keeping with the General Statutes of Connecticut, specifically as it relates to public safety.

Under Connecticut law, a driver who commits a certain number of specific moving or suspension violations must attend a four-hour driver retraining program. There is no limit on the number of times an individual can take the program. A driver who continues to commit violations that put him or her over the statutory limit must repeat the program. However, the state cannot suspend a driver's license solely for continuing to commit these types of offenses.

An example of how House Bill 6193 will impact public safety and quality of life issues in East Hartford is best illuminated in an issue spanning several years. There have been innumerable complaints made over time by East Hartford residents regarding excessive noise from, and reckless driving of, automobiles in a specific neighborhood.

The complainants have reported the incidents to the East Hartford Police Department, who, to their credit, have responded quickly to those incidences. Several times the police have arrested the same individual for reckless driving. They have also issued violations to the driver for infractions ranging from failure to wear a seat belt to excessive muffler noise. That operator has now completed several operator re-training programs. It is this type of irresponsible and potentially dangerous behavior the bill addresses and is a primary reason I strongly support House Bill 6193 and urge its passage.

The amendment will allow the Commissioner to take progressive action to preclude operators, whose behavior clearly violates the statute, from continuing to operate motor vehicles unless and until they are in full compliance with the laws of Connecticut.

Although State regulations allow the Commissioner to suspend the license of a driver who accumulates 11 or more points on his or her driving record, the point system yields few suspensions because the Commissioner is not allowed to assess any points for which a driver has paid a fine and any fees to the Centralized Infractions Bureau (CGS 14-137a).

Clearly, where loopholes exist for repeat offenses without real life consequences, the assurance of public safety for the citizens of East Hartford, and Connecticut, are at risk.

If the legislature approves House Bill 6193, you will be providing for real life consequences that is at once necessary and responsible. We must insure our roads and neighborhoods are safe for our residents; free of operators who would habitually and negatively impact the public safety of our taxpayers, who impact the resources of our public safety professionals, and who remain demonstrably unrepentant.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and to reinforce my strong support for the passage of House Bill 6193. I further acknowledge my appreciation of the efforts of House Bill 6193's author, Representative Henry Genga from East Hartford's 10th district, who has worked tirelessly to resolve this issue on behalf of his constituents, and for the general benefit of the people of Connecticut.